Top Secret

BOLIVIA: Political Turmoil

Colonel Alberto Natusch is facing rapidly mounting civilian opposition to his coup.

Natusch's early repressive actions--imposing an indefinite state of siege, suspending constitutional guarantees, abolishing the Congress, and imposing censorship--appear to have signaled the worst to civilian groups. Student organizations and the million-member Bolivian Labor Central have pledged to work with the opposition. The chief of the Labor Central and other labor leaders may go into hiding following the arrest of several labor leaders in Cochabamba and Santa Cruz.

Yesterday's general strike was generally effective and has been extended at least to today. Labor leaders are urging workers to avoid violence for the present. Various opposition committees, however, reportedly are forming, and clandestine radio stations are calling for armed uprisings in the highly politicized mining towns in the interior.

Meanwhile, deposed President Guevara is in hiding and is said to be maintaining that his government is still the legitimate authority. Congressional leaders are supporting Guevara and are meeting as a shadow government at various sites in La Paz. In the current atmosphere, Natusch will have little chance of either sustaining broad military support or attracting diplomatic recognition.

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